



# Meeting Notes

## Tree & Resources Focus Group Meeting

**4:00 p.m. – Monday, July 20, 2009**

Council Conference Room, 211 West Aspen Ave, Flagstaff, AZ

1. Welcome and Introductions

In attendance:

Mark Sawyers, City of Flagstaff  
Vince Knaggs, City of Flagstaff  
Tish Bogan-Ozman, Real Estate  
Karen Goodwin, Citizen  
Mark Shiery, City of Flagstaff  
Mark Spinti, Citizen  
Steve Nelson, Citizen (Chair)  
**Roger Eastman**, City of Flagstaff  
Kent Hotsenpiller, Engineer  
**Ed Larsen**, City of Flagstaff  
Paul Jones, Citizen  
Tom Bean, Citizen  
Georgia Duncan, Citizen  
Ron Hohlfeld, Citizen  
Mark Woodson, citizen  
David Walker, NABA  
Joe Stringer, USFS  
Steve Gatewood, citizen

2. Focus Group Overview

Steve Nelson, Chair, opened the meeting and invited comment on general issues regarding the Trees/Resources Focus Group. It was suggested that grassland areas and other native vegetation in Flagstaff should also be considered as a resource to be protected.

3. Roles/expectations of the Focus Groups  
Quick overview by the Chair.

4. General comments:

Item #2: Establish mitigation tools:

- Mitigation is a valuable mechanism for replacing relevant resources lost through development.

- Existing mitigation rules in the LDC – apply to pre-development conditions, e.g. to the Staples development. Allowed for preservation of trees on a separate parcel so that more clearing could be accomplished on the Staples site. Has also been used by staff to deal with post-development issues, e.g. Nackard now Marriott property.
- Suggestion to provide mitigation where tree resources are lost and another valued resource is preserved to offset the tree or slope resource (e.g. a wetland)
- Mitigation banking – replacement should be higher value than the lost trees. One way to do this is to make a developer mitigate lost trees by contributing off-site resources through open space preservation. Would apply if a developer cannot preserve resources on his site because of unusual circumstances. Compensate for the level of value that is being lost – acres, percent, ratios, etc. (e.g. mitigate at a 10:1 ratio). To be successful the mitigation requirement must be higher than the equivalent resources lost.
- Mark Sawyers reviewed the protection factors for resources by land use.
  - Reaching the 50% resource preservation for MFR is a major challenge – incentives are not strong enough. Commercial and industrial also hard, but developers can typically work around the resources that need to be protected.
  - Slope protection in new subdivisions is relatively easy to attain – but it is hard to attain in previously platted subdivisions where resources have not been calculated.
- Apply resources based on urban context and transect – Regional Plan would be a tool to identify appropriate locations for resource protection and open space
- Idea – if resources cannot be preserved on site, then the developer can buy x-times more land some where else in the City as open space for permanent resource preservation. Need to establish a mechanism to ensure the resources are protected in the long term future – e.g. with easements or other legal tools.
- Review of existing mitigation tools relative to Marriott project – the Planning and Zoning Commission asked for less trees than the LDC otherwise required to create a more natural setting. Asked for a more natural setting of the replacement trees – instead of 3:1 replacement ratio, City agreed to 1:1 and a more natural planting scheme with terraces, etc.
- We need to make a clear distinction between mitigation as a pre-development concept and compensation/penalties for the intentional/unintentional damage to trees and other resources.
- Need heavier penalties for tree removal – this was a directive from the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council resulting from the Nackard/Marriott project.
- Need better mitigation tools to provide more flexibility to create a better product. Promote negotiation up front – back up with heavier penalties

at the back end. Reinforces the need for mitigation scales based on location, quantities, etc.

- Steve Gatewood to provide sample codes from other communities. Also talk to John Aber at the County for sample codes.
- Mitigation concepts should also apply to wildlife corridors and grasslands.
- Possibly deal with mitigation of view corridors through TDRs. But it is hard to assign a value to “view sheds”. Consultants to review this notion and provide a recommendation. One idea would be to possibly regulate building height on ridge tops (i.e. provide a lower height limit). But this has possible Prop 207 implications unless incentives are offered and TDRs are in place.
- Need to preserve blocks of trees in urban areas – don’t want to allow too much tree removal on commercial etc. lots.
- Need to ensure that the City will take the land dedicated to open space/tree resource preservation through a mitigation strategy and maintain it. In the alternative, use the Trust for Public Lands as a resource to take and hold the land as well as other volunteer conservancy organizations.
- Consensus – we don’t have to replace ponderosas everywhere. Again, base this concept on the transect – replace ponderosas on periphery on lower transects and allow other species in the higher transects.
- Consensus that we should integrate the credits or counts for resources lost as a result of construction in utility easements. This would allow more flexibility for utility easements, drainage easements, sidewalks, etc.
- How are we going to have adequate information on providing a value to resources of all kinds? Is this dealt with in the Regional Plan? Currently the LDC requires the use of a land surveyor to document trees, slopes, and floodplains. If quality is a measure, would also need a forester/arborist. Also need to map grasslands, ecosystems, wildlife corridors, etc. – would be useful as a mitigation tool and to get community buy-in. Share with Regional Plan and zoning code users.
- Steve Gatewood provided a hand out on the signs that will be posted at the Arboretum providing useful information on forest health.
- Discussion on the notion that the tree count for a parcel should be based on the pre-thinning distribution of trees, rather than the post-thinning distribution. This is different to the current approach based on the agreement between CD and FFD as currently tree resources are based on post-thinning distribution.
  - Suggestion that we could find a middle ground based on a new basal area calculation.

- In the alternative establish different standards based on location within the City – use similar logic to the approach currently used by the USFS based on objectives for that location.
- But coverage resulting from thinning is typically much the same as post thinning because the FFD removes the smaller trees located under the larger trees (e.g. Camryn Pines). Code already allows for thinning of trees that are diseased and pest infested.
- Consultant to research and come back with a recommendation.
- Make a distinction between protection of forest resources on a large undeveloped site, as compared to protecting an individual tree or trees on a site. There is a place for both.

Item #3: Balance the need for affordable housing and resource protection:

- Giving up resources is not the best way to provide an incentive for affordable housing. Rather develop more financial incentives and do not compromise trees. Current resource trade-offs do not go far enough to meaningful – only sparsely used so far.
- Consensus that we should not compromise tree resources in the name of affordable housing. Keep the existing standards – do not offer any more of a reduction.

Additional consideration:

Coordinate with Process and Procedures Focus Group – add a requirement that wildlife colonies (e.g. prairie dog colonies) should be mapped and included in the submittal requirements in Chapter 10 (Process and Procedures).

5. **Future meetings:**

None. Mission accomplished. Thanks all!

6. **Adjournment**

5:27 p.m.